

What is claimed is:

[c1] 1. A network photograph service system comprising:
at least one laboratory server that is installed in one of a plurality of laboratories, each laboratory having a picture printer and having an ability to communicate via a network; and
a center server that is connected to the laboratory server,
wherein a plurality of templates are registered in said center server, and
wherein said center server includes a function making the templates accessible on the network.

[c2] 2. The network photograph service system of claim 1,
wherein said center server further includes a function for transmitting information to the laboratory server regarding one of the plurality of templates that is specified by a request to the laboratory server when a printing service process using the template is requested by a customer, and
wherein said laboratory server generates a processed print using the template, based on the transmitted information.

[c3] 3. The network photograph service system of claim 1, wherein said template is transmitted among said plurality of laboratories via the network.

[c4] 4. The network photograph service system of claim 2, wherein said template is transmitted among said plurality of laboratories via the network.

[c5] 5. The network photograph service system of claim 1, wherein each of said plurality of laboratories registers a new template to the center server when the new template is obtained at said one laboratory.

[c6] 6. The network photograph service system of claim 2, wherein each of said plurality of laboratories registers a new template to the center server when the new template is obtained at said one laboratory.

[c7] 7. The network photograph service system of claim 3, wherein each of said plurality of laboratories registers a new template to the center server when the new template is obtained at said one laboratory.

[c8] 8. The network photograph service system of claim 4, wherein each of said plurality of laboratories registers a new template to the center server when the new template is obtained at said one laboratory.

[c9] 9. The network photograph service system of claim 1, wherein each laboratory stores high resolution image data of the template.

[c10] 10. The network photograph service system of claim 2, wherein each laboratory stores high resolution image data of the template.

[c11] 11. The network photograph service system of claim 3, wherein each laboratory stores high resolution image data of the template.

[c12] 12. The network photograph service system of claim 4, wherein each laboratory stores high resolution image data of the template.

[c13] 13. The network photograph service system of claim 5, wherein each laboratory stores high resolution image data of the template.

[c14] 14. The network photograph service system of claim 6, wherein each laboratory stores high resolution image data of the template.

[c15] 15. The network photograph service system of claim 7, wherein each laboratory stores high resolution image data of the template.

[c16] 16. The network photograph service system of claim 8, wherein each laboratory stores high resolution image data of the template.

[c17] 17. The network photograph service system of claim 9, wherein said center server stores the template as low resolution image data having a lower amount of data than the data amount of the high resolution image data stored in the laboratory server.

[c18] 18. The network photograph service system of claim 10, wherein said center server stores the template as low resolution image data having a lower amount of data than the data amount of the high resolution image data stored in the laboratory server.

[c19] 19. The network photograph service system of claim 11, wherein said center server stores the template as low resolution image data having a lower amount of data than the data amount of the high resolution image data stored in the laboratory server.

[c20] 20. The network photograph service system of claim 12, wherein said center server stores the template as low resolution image data having a lower amount of data than the data amount of the high resolution image data stored in the laboratory server.

[c21] 21. The network photograph service system of claim 13, wherein said center server stores the template as low resolution image data having a lower amount of data than the data amount of the high resolution image data stored in the laboratory server.

[c22] 22. The network photograph service system of claim 14, wherein said center server stores the template as low resolution image data having a lower amount of data than the data amount of the high resolution image data stored in the laboratory server.

[c23] 23. The network photograph service system of claim 15, wherein said center server stores the template as low resolution image data having a lower amount of data than the data amount of the high resolution image data stored in the laboratory server.

[c24] 24. The network photograph service system of claim 16, wherein said center server stores the template as low resolution image data having a lower amount of data than the data amount of the high resolution image data stored in the laboratory server.

[c25] 25. A network photograph service system comprising a server that stores a photograph taken by a customer as digital image data, the server carrying out processing for providing services regarding the storage of the digital image data to the customer.

[c26] 26. The network photograph service system of claim 25, wherein said storage services is selected from a group of services comprising at least a service informing the customer via electronic mail that printing of the digital image data has been completed, a service informing the customer via electronic mail that a storage period of the digital image data is about to expire, and a service extending the storage period of the digital image data by receiving electronic mail from the customer.

[c27] 27. A network photographic service system comprising:
at least one laboratory server that is installed in one of a plurality of laboratories, each laboratory having a picture printer and having an ability to communicate via a network; and
a center server installed in a service center that receives a printing service order via the network, wherein the center server
stores a picture recorded by a customer of each laboratory as digital image data,
makes the digital image data accessible on the network,
selects one of the plurality of laboratories to output a print in response to order information transferred from the customer via the network,
provides the order printing service to the customer by transmitting instruction information to the laboratory server installed in the selected laboratory,
creates a record of the processing instructed to each laboratory server by either transmitting the instruction information, based on whether or not the digital image data has been transmitted between the laboratory servers, or based on the amount of digital image data transmitted, and
manages a transaction occurring between the laboratories, or between the center server and each laboratory, based on the created record.

[c28] 28. The network photographic service system of claim 27, wherein management of the transaction includes calculating the cost to be paid to each laboratory for storing the digital image data, or the communication charge for the digital image data.

[c29] 29. The network photographic service system of claim 27, wherein the center server charges the customer based on a result related to the management of the transaction.

[c30] 30. The network photographic service system of claim 28, wherein the center server charges the customer based on a result related to the management of the transaction.

[31] 31. A method of ordering prints comprising the steps of:
receiving an input of a print order that is related to image data;
creating order information representing the print order and specifying how the print is to be received; and
transmitting the order information via a network to a center server installed in a service center that receives the print order, said center server having an ability to communicate via the network with a laboratory server installed in at least one laboratory having a picture printer.

[32] 32. The method of claim 31, further comprising performing print order processing based on the transmitted order information, said print order processing further including the steps of
selecting one laboratory from a plurality of laboratories to output a print based on how the print is to be received, which is specified in the order information; and
ordering a laboratory server to carry out processing for outputting a print by transmitting instruction information to the laboratory server installed in the selected laboratory.

[33] 33. A print ordering apparatus comprising:
receiving means for receiving an input of a print order related to image data;
creating means for creating order information representing the print order and for specifying how the print is to be received; and
transmission means for transmitting the order information via a network to a center server installed in a service center that receives the print order, said center server having an ability to communicate via a network with a laboratory server installed in at least one laboratory having a picture printer.

[34] 34. The print ordering apparatus of claim 33, wherein the center server selects one laboratory from a plurality of laboratories to output a print based on how the print is to be received, which is specified in the order information; and wherein the center server orders a laboratory server to carry out processing for outputting a print by transmitting instruction information to the laboratory server installed in the selected laboratory.

[35] 35. A computer program product comprising a computer-readable medium having computer program logic stored thereon for enabling a processor in a computer system to perform print order processing, said computer program logic:

instructing the reception of an input of a print order regarding image data;
creating order information representing the print order and specifying how the print is to be received; and
transmitting the order information via a network to a center server installed in a service center that receives the print order, said center server having an ability to communicate via a network with a laboratory server installed in at least one laboratory having a picture printer.

[36] 36. The computer program product of claim 35, wherein said computer logic further instructs print order processing based on the transmitted order information, said print order processing including the steps of:

selecting a laboratory to output a print from among at least one laboratory based on how the print is to be received, specified by the order information; and
ordering a laboratory server to carry out processing for outputting a print by transmitting instruction information to the laboratory server installed in the selected laboratory.

[37] 37. A method of ordering prints comprising the steps of:

accessing image data stored in a server via a network;
receiving a printing service order transferred from a customer that is related to the image data;
creating order information representing the printing service order; and
transmitting the order information to the server.

[38] 38. The method of claim 37, further comprising the steps of:
 accessing template image data stored in the server via the network; and
 receiving a processing request from the customer for the image data and the template
 image data, wherein a processing procedure to effect the processing request is included in the
 order information.

[39] 39. A print order processing method comprising the steps of:
 analyzing whether or not a customer has an access right to image data based on order
 information transferred from the customer via a network, the order information representing a
 printing service order that is related to image data; and
 carrying out processing for providing a printing service to the customer only when the
 access right is confirmed.

[40] 40. A print order processing method comprising the steps of:
 selecting a laboratory to output a print from a plurality of selectable laboratories, each
 laboratory having a picture printer and having an ability to communicate via a network, the
 selection based on order information which is transferred from a customer via the network,
 the order information representing a printing service order related to image data used to
 output the print; and
 ordering a laboratory server in the selected laboratory to carry out processing for
 providing the printing service by transmitting instruction information to the laboratory server.

[41] 41. A printing order apparatus comprising:
 access means for accessing image data stored in a server via a network;
 receiving means for receiving a printing service order transferred from a customer that
 is related to the image data;
 creating means for creating order information representing the printing service order;
 and
 transmitting means for transmitting the order information to the server.

[42] 42. The printing order apparatus of claim 41,
 wherein said access means further includes means for accessing template image data
 stored in the server,

wherein said input receiving means further includes means for receiving a processing request from the customer that is to be carried out on the image data and the template image data, and

wherein said order information creating means further includes means for including a processing procedure to effect the processing request along with the order information.

[43] 43. A printing order processing apparatus comprising:

analyzing means for analyzing whether or not a customer has an access right to image data based on order information transferred from the customer via a network, the order information representing a printing service order that is related to image data; and

processing means for carrying out processing for providing a printing service to the customer only when the access right is confirmed.

[44] 44. A printing order processing apparatus comprising:

selecting means for selecting a laboratory to output a print from a plurality of selectable laboratories, each laboratory having a picture printer and having an ability to communicate via a network, the selection based on order information which is transferred from a customer via the network, the order information representing a printing service order related to image data used to output the print; and

ordering means for ordering a laboratory server in the selected laboratory to carry out processing for providing the printing service by transmitting instruction information to the laboratory server.

[45] 45. A computer program product comprising a computer-readable medium having computer program logic stored thereon for enabling a processor in a computer system to perform print order processing, said computer program logic enabling the processor to:

receive an input of a printing service order related to image data;

create order information representing the printing service order; and

transmit the order information via a network to a center server installed in a service center that receives the print order, said center server having an ability to communicate via the network with a laboratory server installed in at least one laboratory having a picture printer.

[46] 46. The computer program product of claim 45, said computer program logic further enabling the processor to:

access template image data stored in the center server via the network;

receive a processing request from the customer that is to be carried out on the image data and the template image data, wherein a processing procedure to effect the processing request is included in the order information.

[47] 47. A computer program product comprising a computer-readable medium having computer program logic stored thereon for enabling a processor in a computer system to perform print order processing, said computer program logic enabling the processor to:

analyze whether or not a customer has an access right to image data based on order information transferred from the customer via a network, the order information representing a printing service order that is related to image data; and

carry out processing for providing a printing service to the customer only when the access right is confirmed.

[48] 48. A computer program product comprising a computer-readable medium having computer program logic stored thereon for enabling a processor in a computer system to perform print order processing, said computer program logic enabling the processor to:

select a laboratory to output a print from a plurality of selectable laboratories, each laboratory having a picture printer and having an ability to communicate via a network, the selection based on order information which is transferred from a customer via the network, the order information representing a printing service order related to image data used to output the print; and

order a laboratory server in the selected laboratory to carry out processing for providing the printing service by transmitting instruction information to the laboratory server.